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Preface for The Quiet Canadian

The title of this book is singularly apt. Infrequently has it happened that so quiet a man wielded great power so fruitfully.

It would, however, be misleading to assume that the personal manner and style of Sir William Stephenson reflected a phlegmatic personality. In spirit, he was imaginative, resourceful, inventive, practical, persistent, brilliant. His authority was imposed without flamboyance, appreciated and acknowledged without envy.

A certain elegance, and indispensable charm, immediately impressed strangers, and continued to be remarked by his intimates. Perhaps, the finest tribute to his capacity for eliciting loyalty and affection from his associates was that of Sir Winston Churchill, who when recommending him to the King for knighthood, wrote: "This (nomination) one is very dear to my heart." ?

After an exceptionally gallant, successful, reckless career as a young officer in the Canadian Flying Corps, during the First World War, he was shot down, and captured by the Germans. It was typical of his temperament that at once he began to plan an escape. (?) When he succeeded in doing so, it was equally typical of him to have carried away an ingenious German tin opener, filched from the enemy's mess, which, upon reaching safety, he patented, thereby laying the foundation of what ultimately became a large fortune.

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